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AUTHOR Arani, Mohammad Reza Sarkar
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ABSTRACT

This paper uses the case study method to describe the characteristics of Japanese school-based inservice teacher training programs, which are designed to help teachers improve their competence and the quality of their teaching activities. Data come from observations of and interviews with teachers in classrooms within 10 public elementary schools. School-based inservice teacher training is based on planning and conducting collaborative research activities. Teachers learn from each other, from their relationships with students, and from enhanced professional dialogue. Japanese teachers view professional development and enhancement of their teaching skills as a lifelong pursuit. They know that experience, self-study, critiques of their teaching by their colleagues, and self-reflection are important parts of this process. Rather than one-time workshops on the latest educational topics, they are engaged in a long-term process of self-reflection and development. The paper proposes a new model of improving teacher competence that consists of four interrelated teacher improvement efforts: teachers on their own (self-improvement, self-renewal, self-directed learning, self-evaluation, and self-actualization); teacher collaboration; teacher-student relationships; and teacher-parent cooperation. (Contains 42 references.) (SM)

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Mohammad Reza Sarkar Arani, Ph.D.
Tehran Allameh Tabatabai University

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P.O.Box: 16765-1379
Tehran, IRAN

Tel:0098-21-2851604

Fax:0098-21-8827787

E-mail:Pajohesh@neda.net

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Mohammad Reza Sarkar Arani, Ph.D.
Tehran Allameh Tabatabai University

Abstract

This paper tries to clarify characteristics and experiences of Japanese in-service teacher training (*Genshoku Kyoiku*) programs which attempt to help teachers to improve quality of the teaching activities and their competence. The case study method is used to examine roles of Japanese school-based in-service teacher training (*Kounai Kenshyu*) as an effective scheme for enrich classroom practices, teachers professional development and improve school activities and environment. From this study, it can be seen that the examination of school-based in-service teacher training models in Japan, especially collaborative research on teaching-learning process (*Jugyou Kenkyu*), offers a real possibility for Iranian teachers and other country's and school leaders to learn from their Japanese colleagues. Japanese teachers view professional development and enhancement of their teaching skills as a lifelong pursuit. They know that experience, self-study, critiques of their teaching by their colleagues and self-reflection are important parts of this process. Rather than "one-time" workshops on the latest educational topic they are engaged in a "long-term" process of self-reflection and development.

Search words: Professional Development, School-Based Training, Self-reflection, Collaborative Research

Background

Scholarly research (Yoshimoto, 1986; Broadfoot & Osborn, et. al. 1987; Tickle, 1987; Barth, 1990; Dean, 1991; Kansanen, 1991; Theissen, 1992; Imazu, 1996; Sarkar Arani, 1996; Fueyo & Koorland, 1997; Sarkar Arani, 1998), suggests that one of the most important things for teachers' professional development is to do research into their own classrooms with their own students. This has been found to promote teachers' self-renewal and continuous improvement in the quality of their teaching (Adams & Hamm, 1994; Harris, et. al. 1996).

Recent approaches to teacher development have centered more in schools and classrooms, involving teachers more directly in decisions which shape their instructional approaches (Theissen, 1992, Darling-Hammond, 1998). School-based in-service teacher training helps teachers to reconceptualize how they can improve both their professional effectiveness in their work and their relationships with their students through classroom instruction and related activities (Tickle, 1987; Ashton, et. al. 1989; Graves, 1990; Shimahara & Sakai, 1995; Smylie, 1995).

One way teachers can engage in significant professional development is through "learning by doing" (Schon, 1987; Fish, 1989; Graves, 1990). The ILO-UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of the Teacher states that teachers must be free to organize their own in-service training, in a manner which makes sense to them for it to have the greatest impact upon their practice. If the teachers' freedom to conduct independent in-service teacher training is usurped, one loses the capacity to truly function as a teacher (Horio, 1988).

School-based in-service teacher training has a more significant effect on developing the teacher's competence and improving quality of the teaching-learning process than other types of in-service teacher training (Morant, 1981; Thiessen, 1989; Lunt, et. al. 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1998). Witness that 78% of teachers in Japan are interested in participating in school-based in-service teacher training schemes as compared with other types of in-service teacher training including programs of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and local boards of education (Ota, 1989). The school-based approach appeals to teachers' interests, is responsive to their variability, and provides an opportunity for them to learn to interact with students, to research their own classrooms and pupils, to build parental support for their work, and to justify ongoing decisions and actions on the basis of their research.

Many Japanese educational practices have been examined by American educators for possible application in the U.S.. This is one which I believe has been overlooked and yet has the potential for significant impact, especially as more schools become site-based managed.

The data presented in this paper come from my dissertation research project in Kamana Elementary School, a typical municipal elementary school, in Nagoya, Japan. Kamana was selected for study after observing classrooms in each 10 different public elementary schools in Aichi and Gifu prefectures. I have conducted research in this school continuously since 1995. I employed a case study method for data collection. My approach involved classroom observations and interviews with teachers, and the examination of other relevant school documents.

Interview and observational data were collected from teachers before and after they participated in the school-based in-service teacher training program. In the interviews, teachers were asked to discuss their background and experiences in teaching and what had changed as a result of the school-based in-service teacher training relative to their professional development in general and their own teaching specifically.

Japanese School-Based In-Service Teacher Training (*Kounai Kenshyu*)

In Japan, the competence and quality appropriate to the professional responsibility of teachers is formed gradually throughout various stages of their career. Since the Law for Special Regulations Concerning Education Public Service Personnel (1949) requires teachers to pursue consistent in-service teacher training, various systematic programs are conducted at national, prefectural (like states), municipal and school levels (Monbusho, 1994). Japanese teachers' professional

development programs are organized by: Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*Monbusho*), Prefectural Education Center (*Kyoiku Sentaa*), Municipal Education Center (*Shichoson Kyoiku Sentaa*), Beginning Teachers Training (*Shoninsha Kenshyu*), Universities and Research Institutions (*Daigaku ya Kenkyusho*), Self-learning or Training (*Jiko Kyoiku ya Kenshyu*), Informal Training Activities (*Minkan Kyoiku Dantai to Kenkyukai*), and School-Based In-Service Teacher Training (*Kounai Kenshyu*).

There are many school-based in-service teacher training programs in Japanese schools. My study focused upon one specific type, that of collaborative research on the teaching-learning process (*Jugyou Kenkyu*).

Collaborative Research on Teaching-Learning Process (*Jugyou Kenkyu*)

Jugyou Kenkyu is a fundamental program in Japanese school-based in-service teacher training. It is based on the three steps: **Plan-Do-See**. This means that first the staff must make a plan for their collaborative research. Then they implement this plan and finally they evaluate and reflect upon the success of the process in terms of revising and improving their instruction. But most important it is a *collaborative* activity (Sarkar Arani, 1998).

In Japan, each school has a committee for planning and coordinating the activities of the school-based in-service teacher training programs according to the notification issued by the City Board of Education. Various school problems are discussed in the "all faculty" meeting at the beginning of each academic year in April. The nature of the meeting is based on key school issues and the learning environment.

Kamana Elementary School, as other schools in Japan, has a committee for planning the school-based in-service teacher training programs. Suggestions of the committee are discussed in the "all faculty members" meeting and decided cooperatively. They are free to decide their own professional development schemes in accordance with the guidelines issued by the City Board of Education. For example, the school-based in-service teacher training in Kamana Elementary School in the 1995-96 academic year was planned around the following topics:

- Improvement of educational activities and the teaching-learning process through the design of teaching materials, learning activities, evaluation methods, and attention to individuals' learning environment.
- Development of teachers' professional competence through collaborative professional development, cooperative planning, enhancing professional discussion, and reflecting on their teaching experiences.
- Improvement of relationships and mutual understanding among teachers through informal activities such as: visiting companies, museums and institutes, art activities, sports, trips, meetings and parents' participation.
- Improvement of the educational environment through the design of new teaching materials and learning activities related to social changes, learning how use information and communication technology in their teaching, and practical inquiry

strategies for integrating the computer into the teaching-learning process.

On the basis of the four school-based in-service teacher training topics for the 1995-96 school year, the **Plan-Do-See** process proceeded as follows:

Plan. First, all of the teachers discussed the teaching themes. They wished to focus upon theme was closely related to one of the school's problems. They decided upon four themes for collaborative research related to the teaching-learning process: (1) the development of teaching materials in first grade life subject (social study) area; (2) improving the teaching process in 5th grade mathematics; (3) enhancing assessment in third grade mathematics; and (4) understanding the individual world of students in third grade social study. Second, they then divided in two small groups. One group consisted of teachers of the 1st through the 3rd grades and the other of teachers of the 4th through the 6th grades. Each group of teachers discussed the teaching materials, content and methods, and developed one or two lesson plans cooperatively. Third, all of the teachers discussed ways to improve the lesson plans before implementation. In this manner they prepared themselves as well as could be possible before teaching the lessons.

Do. Next, one of the teachers agreed to present a lesson in his classroom on the basis of the lesson plan made cooperatively with colleagues. Fellow teachers were active observers during this class session and made notes on what happened in the classroom during the lesson. Each teacher had a specific assigned role during the observation period. For example, one made a video recording of the lesson, another examined the whole teaching-learning process, one focused on the teacher's classroom management, one studied the teacher-student interaction, another looked at the student-student relationships. The 5th grade mathematics teaching activities (calculating the area of trapezoids), were focused on pupils' thinking, interests and participation in discussion and learning activities. The teacher used cooperative learning techniques and placed importance on learning by doing through the use of manipulatives. He tried to implement the lesson as closely to the plan as possible.

See. Following the teaching of the lesson, all of the teachers then met again as a group for analysis, criticism and evaluation the lesson plan and the teacher's implementation. During this session they examined the appropriateness of the teaching theme, the materials used, instructional methods, problems involved in the teacher's performance and the characteristics of each pupil's learning activities. They also discussed necessary revisions to the lesson plan, suggested new teaching-learning strategies and conducted self-directed professional development. They also discussed and evaluated the plan based on the result of the discussion of all teachers in both groups and prepared a revised lesson plan.

In *Jugyou Kenkyu*, teachers have opportunities for professional collaboration in solving school problems and addressing teachers' individual needs. They can adopt innovative teaching methods, plan for the use of new technology, focus upon the teaching of specific skills, and a host of other matters related to classroom instruction and management (Sarkar Arani, 1996). These provide opportunities for teachers to share their experiences, their successes and failures, and to seek solutions to common problems together with full understanding of the constraints and limitations under

which they must work.

This approach of teachers' professional development is centered on the classroom, on the exchange of expertise through the provision of an appropriate environment for teachers' learning from each other, on the challenge of teacher-student relationships, and on learning through participation and an enhanced professional dialogue. Teachers are learners in their own school and are capable of determining what and how they should develop and change. They learn from their own lesson plans, self-directed projects, critiques of their work from colleagues, and collaborative research activities.

One Teacher's Classroom

During my doctoral research project in Mr. Ishizaka's 5th grade mathematics classroom activities at Kamana Elementary School (1996-1997), I examined how one teacher's decision-making is analyzed by fellow teachers' through discussion during collaborative research on the teaching-learning process (*Jugyou Kenkyu*). Following Ishizaka's teaching of a specific mathematics lesson, the discussion by his colleagues who had been observers focused on the following topics:

- Analyzing attention to individual needs of pupils and asking questions to understand his or her thinking,
- Leading the progress of the lesson and transition points from one activity to another,
- Nominating pupils and reacting to their behavior during teaching-learning process,
- Examining, how the teacher adapt the lesson to the time available?
- Choosing appropriate teaching techniques to facilitate the use of teaching materials selected, and,
- Guidance of pupil activities for solving problems.

Following the critique of his teaching by his colleagues, Mr. Ishizaka reflected upon his own teaching, decision-making, and behavior. He learned how to bring alternative activities into his own teaching-learning process. He thought in a new way about his classroom instruction activities and reconsidered his expectations of students in their growth and development. He now views his development as more of a continuous and positive process.

Mr. Ishizaka reflected that, "learning about teaching is a collaborative activity and teacher training is best conducted in small groups and networks with ideas and experiences being shared and discussed. Through, *Jugyou Kenkyu*, as a fundamental school-based in-service teacher training program, teachers' find opportunities to work together, to reflect upon their teaching experiences, to understand and communicate their ideas to others, and to learn from their teaching assessment. Rather than learning a formal theory of teaching and learning, teachers' learn and develop skills through observation and reflection on their practice, analysis and evaluation of teaching, and collaborative discussion about classroom activities. Teachers discuss and decide their own research theme, lesson plan, class for practice, how to examine and reflect of

teaching, and how include students as partner in their collaborative research on classroom activities. Through *Jugyou Kenkyu* teachers are doing action research in practice" (taken from Teacher Interview, March 22, 1997).

In my study, I examined the influence of collaborative research on the teaching-learning process (*Jugyou Kenkyu*), specifically upon the quality of teaching in Mr. Ishizaka's 5th grade mathematics classroom activities. I found that he changed his teaching and classroom management styles after participating in the school-based in-service teacher training, based on his own assessment (self-reflection) as well as feedback from his colleagues who had been observers of his teaching (collaborative reflection). This reflection caused him to revise his teaching so as to:

- Provide many opportunities for students to describe their own thinking in the classroom, and manage the classroom as an effective learning environment in which students learned through participation and sharing in the teaching-learning process,
- Develop better teacher-student and student-student interaction in the classroom, including pairing fast learners with slow learners to better understand certain mathematical concepts,
- Give all pupils a chance to get feedback and respond, including both boys and girls,
- Provide more free time for pupils to write, think, color and draw, use manipulatives, respond, and use seatwork as a time to practice each segment of the lesson and for the teacher to evaluate the children's level of understanding.

Collaborative, school-based research is an equally promising response to the current trend toward inclusive educational practices. As special and general educators work closely together to provide services for learners with disabilities in the general education setting, shared research efforts can provide both with a common understanding of their complementary skills and increased professional cooperation. Also they increase their skills as educational practitioners and researchers (Fueyo & Koorland, 1997, p.342). In this case it is possible to have a model of teacher competency in which the classroom is not only a place of work but also a source of professional development. This requires a considerable shift in perspective for teachers. They see themselves as having common tasks of teaching, planning, appraising curriculum materials, responding to students, evaluating students learning and so on. Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) comments on this in "*Educational Leadership*":

"... Teachers have organized their learning around the development of standards and assessments of student work, evaluating both student learning and the effectiveness of their own teaching in the process. The result is a greater appreciation for what matters and what works, as well as what needs to change to promote student success" (p.11).

Problems and Analysis

Previous scholarly research (Broadfoot & Osborn, et. al. 1987; Ueda, et. al., 1989; Lunt, et. al. 1993, Sayer, 1996) has suggested that professional development has

individuality, which includes personal interests and aptitudes. It is recognized that to provide positive encouragement for teachers to do research, the opportunity for "learning by doing" and the promise of academic achievement are of the critical importance. School-based in-service teacher training depends particularly on these aspects to assist teachers' independent efforts in development and self-improvement projects.

Teaching is, essentially, a learned profession and a teacher is a member of the scholarly community (Shulman, 1989, p.9). Teaching quality and teachers' professional development are closely tied to school activities and environment. In the school-based in-service teacher training, teachers find opportunities to reflect on many school problems that challenge them and develop their own responses.

Placed against the research cited above, the author found that the contemporary situation of school-based in-service teacher training in Japan provides various opportunities for change and enriching classroom practices, for teachers' professional development and for improving school activities and environment. But this is not without problems.

Japanese teachers are extremely busy in preparing their daily work and in undertaking other school duties. According to the survey conducted by Menlo and Poppleton (1990), about 90% of teachers experience "stress in the job" and feel that, to a great extent, matters connected with work occupy the mind outside working hours. Although teachers are quite satisfied with their present jobs, they feel too busy, and sometimes too tired. According to a study of teachers' culture (Kudomi, 1988) 80.6% of the teachers claimed "being busy". Based upon this research as well as my own study findings, I believe that school-based in-service teacher training should have more precise goals, and that these goals should be more efficiently and flexibly attainable. The policy should be to encourage teachers to apply themselves to self-directed learning. This must become a normal part of their reflection upon the ongoing teaching-learning process.

Stigler, et. al. (1996, p.216) observe that Japanese society views teaching more as a craft, as a skill that can be perfected through practice and that can benefit from shared learning. If music were used as an analogy, the Japanese conception of the ideal teacher would be like that of the concert pianist. The great pianist is not expected to write the concerto but only to perform it well. An innovative teacher in the United States is one who organizes her own curriculum, makes her own materials, and implements her lessons with independent initiative. In Japan, the innovative teacher is one who skillfully teaches the lesson that is prescribed by the text.

School-based in-service teacher training programs are designed to emphasize only the responsibility of teachers in the classroom, and to examine the technical skills of teaching. In contrast, I believe that teachers' professional development should be about challenging dominant myths, assumptions, and hidden message systems in teaching and schooling as they are currently organized. This view is concurrent with that of Smyth (1995) who states that professional development, "... should be concerned with creating improvements in educational practice and the social relationships that underlie those practices, and ought to be about crafting and living

out mutual forms of accountability among teachers, administrators, parents, and students" (p.86).

We must reflect upon teachers' ability, competence, role, career and staff development. It is a traditional expectation upon teachers that they, as "teaching machines" (teachers as actors), need only to worry about the techniques of teaching, classroom management and discipline techniques. Based on this view, teachers' just react to the plan and curriculum decisions prescribed for him or her by the educational management and policy. According to Kansanen (1991), "... in these kinds of models, a teacher has no great degree of freedom and his activity is guided by a detailed curriculum and circumstantial textbooks with ready-made teaching material and tests. In that position, it is perhaps not important how the teacher thinks and decides because he or she does not have much to decide" (p.251).

Ashcroft & Griffiths (1990) note that "the development of classroom skills, e.g., voice control and questioning, are necessary but not the only requirements for becoming a reflective teacher. It is essential to develop other skills, including the ability to communicate and exchange ideas; to analyze and evaluate data collected; to engage in self-assessment; to use a variety of motivational strategies; to address students' different learning needs and to develop the ability to criticize existing states of affairs from a moral-social-political point of view" (p.36).

As T. Robert (1990) argues, "no classroom management techniques will be effective for very long if effective teaching is absent. Classroom management strategies are not substitutes for good teaching" (p.5). In the modern educational system, successful schools need to develop new skills in teachers skills in providing and designing effective teaching and in improving the quality of learning. These skills are closely related to all of aspects of educational activities and school life, and develop in teachers a new responsibility and professionalism.

An Alternative Perspective: More Responsibility

For teachers to develop effective teaching competences we must be prepared to give them more responsibility, authority and participation in the leadership of schools, including in school management, curriculum planning and teaching-learning activities. It is obvious that these are teachers' responsibilities and they should be prepared to take them. The more they take responsibility, the more they should be independent in their roles. This belief is supported by Sayer (1996) who notes that, "teachers need to have professional scope and space, to have ownership of the teaching task, to feel responsible and professionally accountable for the quality of service they provide" (pp.10-11).

In the modern educational system, teachers as professionals, as curriculum planners, as decision-makers, as researchers, as intellectuals, as learners, as artists and as clinicians have a lot of responsibilities related to society, school and classroom. They should be skilled in many areas: developing curriculum, changes in assessment, improving the teaching-learning process, shared decision-making in school improvement, participating in a self-managing school and so on (see Figure 1).

School-based in-service teacher training programs must be sure to include all of the above mentioned aspects of teachers performance.

Figure 1, as a model of alternative perspective on teachers' professional development, shows both the present status as well as a new perspective on teachers' development. This model is based on a critical discourse on Japanese school-based in-service teacher training. At present, Japanese school-based in-service teacher training focuses mainly upon teachers' responsibility in the classroom during the teaching-learning process, i. e., improving the existing instructional skills of teachers. But in the new perspective, I believe effective teaching and increased professionalism in teachers will come from developing new skills including; developing curriculum, shared decision-making, engaging in self-directed growth and so on.

Education policy related to teachers' competence and responsibility should be more conducive to change the conceptualization of teacher quality and teacher responsibility. This can be done by developing effective in-service teacher training courses within the school, based on skills necessary for self-directed growth.

According to Wardle (1976), "it is now sufficiently clear that the teacher to whom you give only a drudge's training, will only do a drudge's work, and will do it in a drudge's spirit" (p.105). The author proposes that in order to foster teachers' professional development we must give more responsibility to teachers and we must believe that the school-based in-service teacher training is an effective approach in doing, learning, and developing new skills, responsibility and professionalism for improving the quality of educational activities, school life and teachers' competence.

Considering these roles of in-service teacher training as a starting point, we can develop the school-based in-service teacher training and *Jugyou Kenkyu* into a new model of improving teachers' competence that consists of four interrelated projects of teachers' professional development. This new model offers a possibility in which the school/classroom is not only a place of work but also a source of professional development, where teachers have common tasks to make the teaching-learning process more effective, and to participate in the leadership of school activities (see Figure 2).

- **Teachers on their own:** This is a self-improvement project. It includes self improvement, self-renewal, self-directed learning, self-evaluation and self-actualization knowledge. In case of Kamana Elementary School, journal writing is a method of in-service teacher training based on teachers' self-directed learning which is popular in Japan. Furthermore, teachers attend some private study circles which are spontaneous and provide opportunities for teachers to study based on their needs, interests, justifying ongoing decisions, self-improvement projects, and independent development experiences. In Mr. Ishizaka's case, he has participated in *Wakate Kyoikusha Kenkyukai*, a spontaneous study circle for enriching classroom practices, and *Shakaika Kenkyukai*, a spontaneous and voluntary study circle for social study in the elementary school.

- **Teacher with teachers:** This can be regarded as a collaborative development project. It involves such aspects as collaborative development, exchanging

experiences, planning cooperatively, learning through participation and enhancing professional dialogue. In the case of Kamana Elementary School, teachers have opportunities such as: *Jugyou Kenkyu*, collaborative research on the teaching-learning process, *Jugyou Kentoukai*, collaborative reflection on classroom activities, and *Tano Gakko no Jugyou Sankan*, in which the teacher visits another school to observe some classes, talk with the teachers of that school about new designs for teaching and learning, and writes a report for his own school.

• **Teacher and students:** Teacher-student interaction means activities such as: teacher-student interactions, teacher-student participation, teacher-student sharing in teaching and learning. In the case of Kamana Elementary School, each teacher, based on his or her grade, subject, and subject matter content, attempts to develop student interaction (teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction) through participation, and sharing teaching and learning. For example, in Mr. Ishizaka's mathematics classroom (calculating the area of trapezoids), he focused upon students' thinking, interests and participation in discussion and learning activities. He used cooperative learning techniques and places importance on learning by doing and using of manipulatives. He tried to understand students individuality and needs but he did not adequately include students as partners in his professional development.

• **Teacher and parents:** Teacher-parent cooperation project involves teacher-parent discussion and curriculum planning, and the common responsibility of children. In case of Kamana Elementary School, as other school in Japan, they have a special program known as *Jugyou Sankan*. Teachers of each grade invite parents to observe their classes, make notes and suggest ways to improve the teaching-learning process in the after class discussion. In this area teachers should make more effort toward involving parents in curriculum planning.

These are highly challenging opportunities for teachers to improve the quality of their teaching, to do research on the teaching-learning process, to exchange experiences with teachers and parents, to understand parents' expectation, to provide collaborative learning, to understand learners' needs and characteristics, to obtain self-renewal and continuous change and establish collaborative relations with administrators based on self-directed, collaborative professional development.

From this study it can be claimed that, the Japanese school-based in-service teacher training approaches (especially *Jugyou Kenkyu*) are well developed and effective in the first (teacher on their own) and second (teacher with teachers) elements of the new model of teachers' professional development. However, based on the new model, the third (teacher and students) and fourth (teacher and parents) elements require further development in Japanese school-based in-service teacher training.

Conclusion

I believe that the examination of school-based in-service teacher training models in Japan, especially *Jugyou Kenkyu*, offers a real possibility for the world teachers and school leaders to learn from their Japanese colleagues. So many of the

educational practices cited for transfer by comparativists and others from Japan to the United States, such as cleaning classrooms, longer schools years, and serving lunches to younger peers are actually quite trivial. But the on-going professional development of teachers is a very important area which has real meaning. Japanese teachers view professional development and enhancement of their teaching skills as a lifelong pursuit. They know that experience, self-study, critiques of their teaching by their colleagues and self-reflection are important parts of this process. They are generally not favorable toward "one-time" workshops on the latest educational topic or fad being promoted. Rather, they are engaged in a long-term process of self-reflection and development. I believe that the world teachers would respond positively to this kind of career professional development view as well. Who would like to begin?

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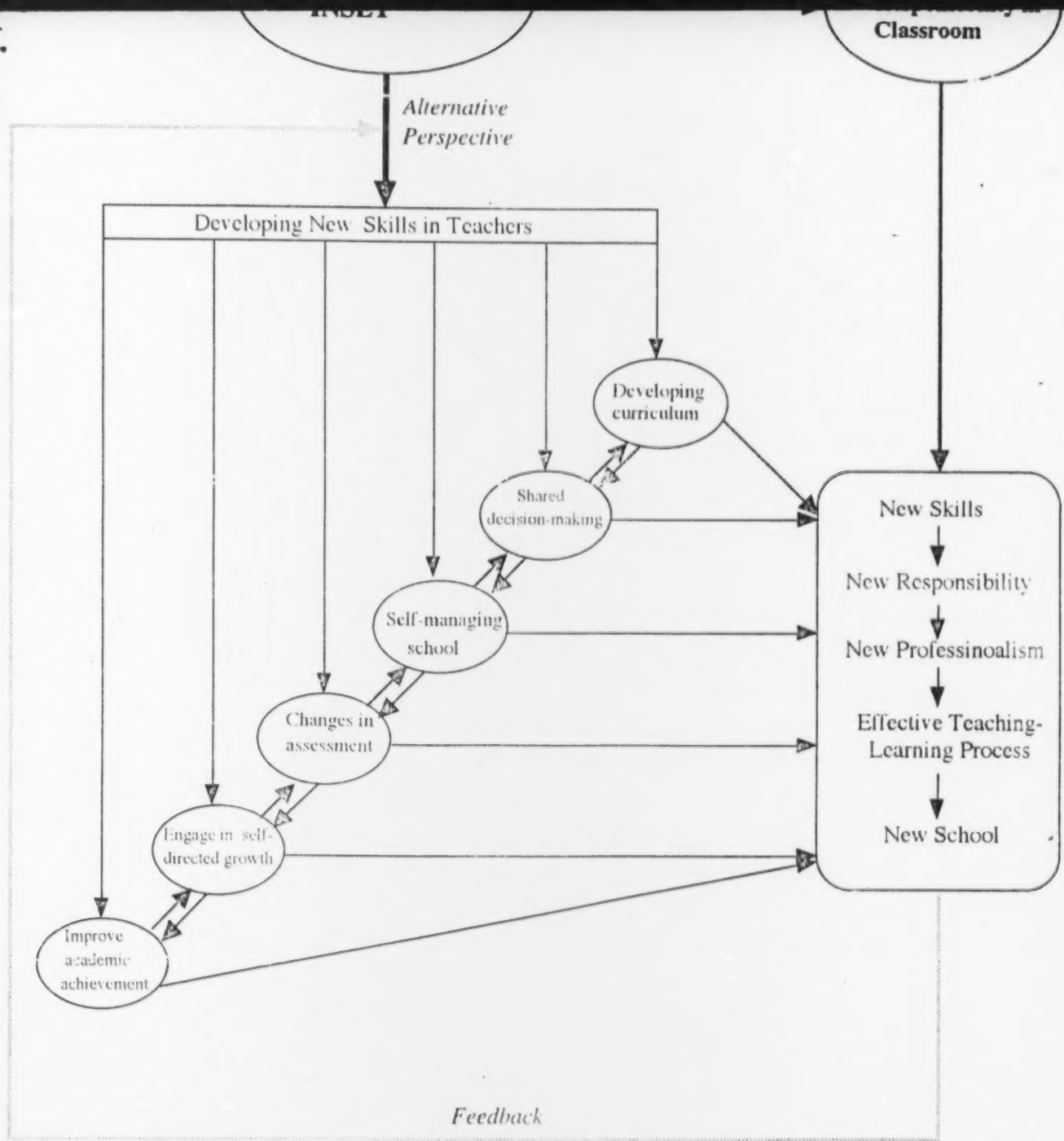


Figure 1 : Model of Alternative Perspective on Teachers' Professional Development

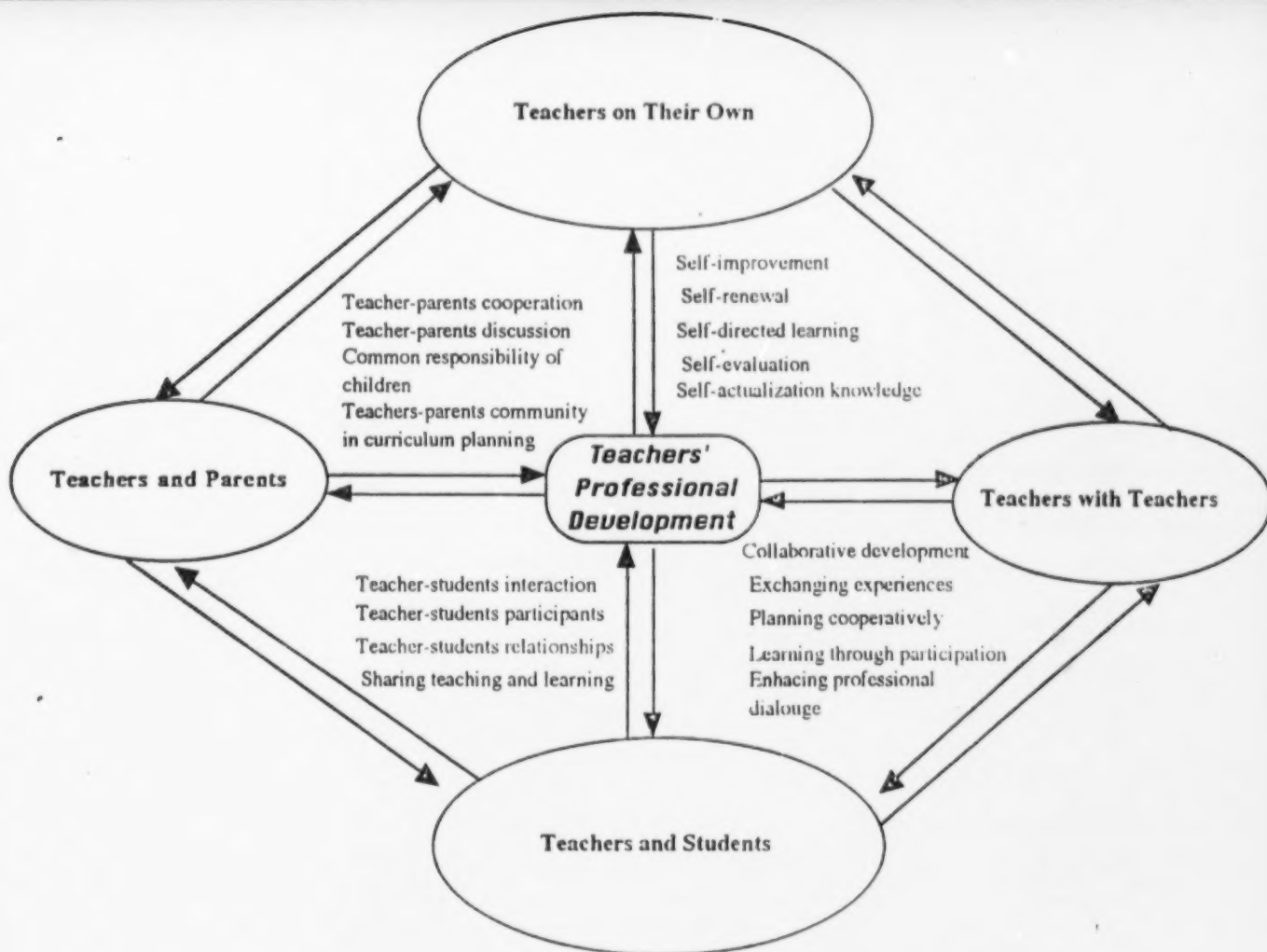


Figure 2 : Model of Enriching Classroom Practice and Teachers' Professional Development

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